

# TENANTS' REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES 2012/13

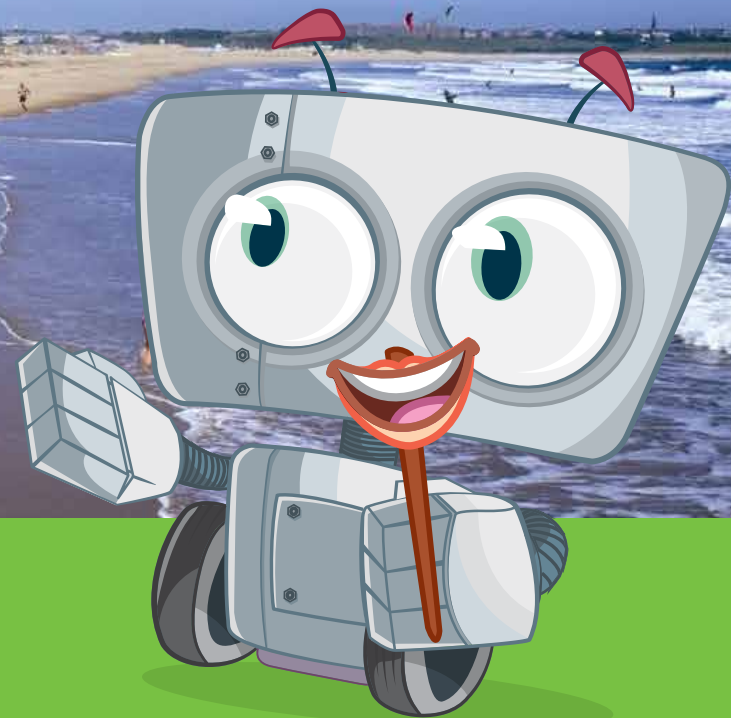
A review of the year in South Tyneside Homes  
written by the tenants, for the tenants.



South Tyneside Council

South  
Tyneside Homes

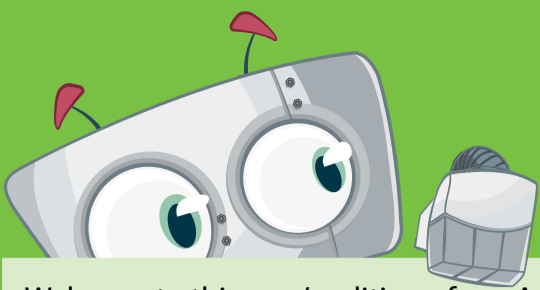
South Tyneside Council's  
Housing Company



## Let us know what you think

You can review this year's Annual Review online. Just scan this code with your Smartphone and answer a few short questions. It only takes a moment and we really appreciate your feedback.





# WELCOME

Welcome to this year's edition of our Annual Report. This is the 4th year we've worked together with South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes to produce it. They give us the information we need, but we decide what goes in.

We're ordinary tenants who do this because we care about our community and the homes that we all live in. Our journey on page 3 shows everything we did when producing this report.



*This is us! We wrote the report.*

## WHAT WE WILL COVER

The Government have set standards around:

Involvement and Empowerment

Home

Neighbourhood & Community

Tenancy

But we also thought the following areas were relevant to tenants:

Keeping You in Your Home

Local Offers

Making Sense of the Money

Our job is to let you know how your landlord is performing against these standards. This symbol shows whether we think they are meeting them.

Standard not met

Standard partially met

Standard met



That's enough from us for now. Read on, enjoy and we hope you learn as much about South Tyneside Homes as we did.



YOUR LANDLORD

On behalf of South Tyneside Council I would like to thank the tenants for the time and effort they have put in to the writing of what is our fourth Annual Report. As Lead Member for Housing and Transport I am very proud to introduce to you this new-look report on behalf of everyone involved.

The report focuses on the Council's and South Tyneside Homes' progress against the Regulations for Social Housing as well as other areas that may be of interest to tenants. It analyses our performance and sets challenges for the year ahead. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have.



*Cllr Jim Foreman  
Lead Member for  
Housing and  
Transport*



YOUR HOUSING PROVIDER

I would like to introduce you to this year's Annual Report to Tenants which was written by tenants in partnership with South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes. The report covers the performance of housing services from 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.

Our tenants have put in a lot of effort in to produce this report and I hope that you will find it an interesting read. Throughout you will see areas in which the company is performing really well and areas in which we still need to improve.

Working in partnership with South Tyneside Council and our tenants to improve services is extremely important to us at South Tyneside Homes and we look forward to working together to ensure continuous improvement over the next year.



*Martin Knowles  
Senior Executive  
Director*

# OUR JOURNEY

## MAY

Training - this is us brushing up on our Annual Report writing skills. After all, it has been a year since the last one! We even had homework to do!



Training



Homework

## JUNE

This is when we started to come up with the design for this edition.

We also had to consider the content. This meant we had to digest the information that South Tyneside Homes and the Council had sent us.

We decided, based on this information, whether the standard was met or not.



Design Workshop



Reviewing information

## JULY

Workshops allowed us to meet with managers and effectively challenge them on the areas where we thought they could improve.

It was really good because they agreed actions to take away. We will monitor these to make sure they are done and we'll report back next year.



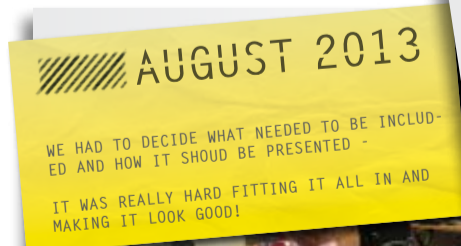
Scrutiny Workshop



## AUGUST

This is when we decided what needed to be included and how it should be presented.

We worked really hard with one of South Tyneside Homes' designers on fitting it all in and making it look good.

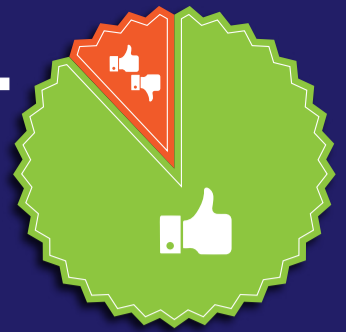


Pete busy with the design



The Metro

# INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT



"We feel this standard is mostly being met. The next couple of pages show all of the achievements as well as a few areas for improvement."

## GETTING INVOLVED



South Tyneside Homes has a dedicated Involvement Team. Their job is to help and support the formation and activities of tenants' panels or equivalent groups. Over the last year they have worked with tenants to form a Scrutiny Panel, re-launch the Inspection Team and worked across the Borough supporting Residents' Associations.

## TENANT SATISFACTION WITH LANDLORD LISTENING TO VIEWS

2008/09		60%
2009/10		57%
2012/13		70%



## TENANT SCRUTINY

*I am the chair of the Scrutiny Panel and we work closely with the Inspection Team on a programme of work that will help inform future Annual Reports.*

*Our jobs are quite similar, the difference is the inspection team only inspect against service standards, but the Scrutiny Panel are free to look at services in more depth.*

*Together we carry out checks and reviews to test how South Tyneside Homes is performing and make recommendations for improvements based on our findings.*

Ken Barkas



Scrutiny Panel

## TENANTS' CONFERENCE 2012 - WELFARE REFORM



Inspection Team



108 Tenants received various training from south Tyneside homes

## SERVICE STANDARDS

The services you can expect from South Tyneside Homes are set out in their "Service Standards." Some of these need updating and we need to agree a clear process for reviews and how they will be monitored by tenants.



### ACTION AGREED



This year tenants will work with South Tyneside Homes to review their service standards and decide how they will be monitored and scrutinised by tenants in the future.

South Tyneside Homes  
Working in partnership with South Tyneside Council

### Customer Care Service Standards



### Our promise to you

South Tyneside Homes is committed to providing you with excellent services that are relevant and meet your needs. Our service standards let you know the level of service you can expect from us.

We have set our standards with you and you have said these are the things that matter most. You have been involved in agreeing our standards and you will be helping us to monitor them, to make sure we keep Our Promise to You.

We aim to provide the best service we can and in doing so we will:

- Be polite and listen to what you have to tell us
- Treat you fairly and as an individual
- Respect your confidentiality
- Provide information that is clear, accurate and appropriate

We have a range of standards covering the different services that we provide. For more information on our other standards, please contact any of our offices listed at the end of this leaflet.

We will publish the results of your agreed Top Ten Service Standards every quarter in our newsletter 'Housing Matters', on our website and in our housing offices. We welcome your views and we would like you to tell us when we get things wrong or right. We will use the feedback you give us to improve the services we deliver.



## ACCESSING SERVICES

We were impressed with everything South Tyneside Homes offers to tenants who can't access services in the usual way including:



British Sign Language



Translation Services



Help with forms



Information Packs



Home visits

We were concerned about staff not always using these effectively following feedback from a tenant mystery shopping exercise.



Mystery Shoppers



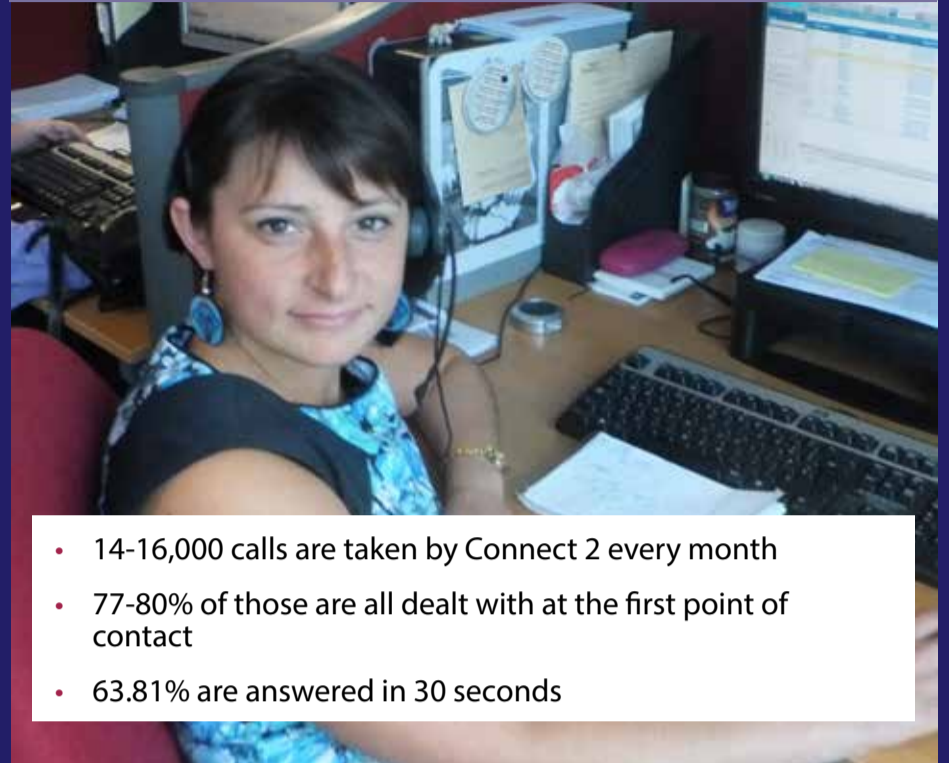
**ACTION AGREED**



There is a commitment to improve and promote awareness amongst staff and tenants about accessing services in the easiest way.

## CONNECT 2

**CALL: 0300 123 6633**



- 14-16,000 calls are taken by Connect 2 every month
- 77-80% of those are all dealt with at the first point of contact
- 63.81% are answered in 30 seconds

**ACTION AGREED**



Impressive? We thought so but we still believe there is room for improvement and the team have agreed to develop an action plan to bring down call waiting times.

## COMPLIMENTS

AND

## COMPLAINTS

**538**

Total compliments received in the year 2012/13 including:

- Good service
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Going the extra mile
- Providing help with application processes
- Providing good and helpful advice

Every organisation receives complaints and compliments. This is a good thing as it helps improve services, however, South Tyneside Homes needs to get better at monitoring service improvements that result from a complaint.



**333**

Housing Services

**588**

Housing Repairs and Decent Homes

**10**

Corporate Services

**77**

of these complaints progressed to a level 2 complaint.

**30**

of these complaints progressed to a level 3 complaint.

**Of which:**

- 210 were upheld
- 211 were partially upheld
- 349 were not upheld
- 161 - other

## Reasons for complaints

- Unhappy with quality of service
- Delays to work being carried out
- Lack of communication
- Dissatisfaction with a decision
- Lack of action
- Unhappy with property facilities e.g. kitchen, bathroom, heating system
- Standard of property
- Compensation requested following flooding to property

**ACTION AGREED**



South Tyneside Homes has agreed to enhance the monitoring of complaints.

# HOME STANDARD

"No major issues here. Communication and keeping tenants informed about work on their homes are the areas where we would like to see improvement."



2,938 HOMES MADE DECENT!



This is excellent news for the Borough, however, a Scrutiny Panel Review highlighted that some improvements could still be made when communicating with tenants.



## ACTION AGREED



Managers have agreed to improve communication over the coming year.



## Green Homes in green places

South Tyneside Homes has worked hard to secure huge levels of external funding to invest in energy saving measures, including replacing old inefficient heating systems and providing adequate insulation to lofts and cavities. This has made a real difference to tenants' lives.



## ACTION AGREED

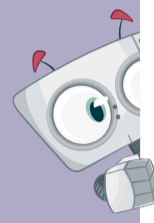


In the future South Tyneside Homes is hoping to give energy advice to all new tenants when they sign up and will develop guidance and training for tenants.

## REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE



### DID YOU KNOW?



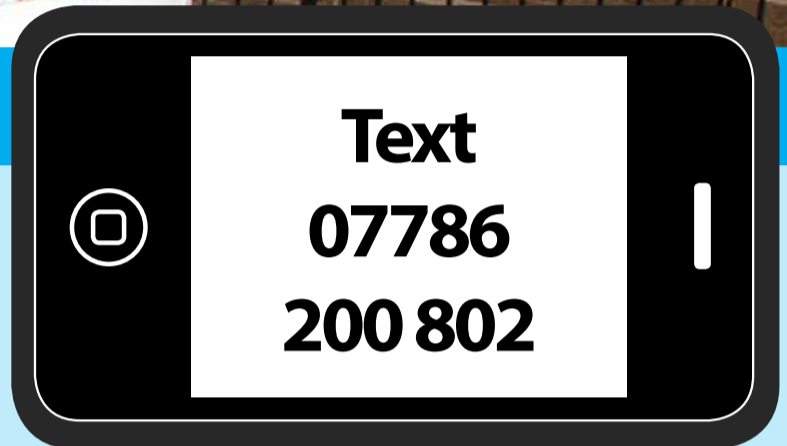
South Tyneside Homes carried out 110,933 repairs.

1,200 tenants were surveyed and 1,145 were satisfied with the service. That's 95.46%



### GOT A REPAIR?

Text FIXIT, your name, your address and a short note about the repair you need.



### PLANNED REPAIRS

To ensure value for money some repairs are carried out on a planned programme. This is all well and good but tenants often find that they are not kept up to date with the repair and date for completion.



#### ACTION AGREED



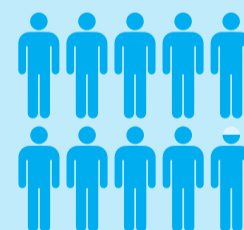
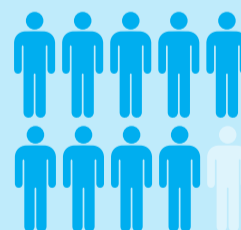
Managers have committed to developing a communication plan to make sure tenants are kept up to date.

### ADAPTATIONS CHANGE LIVES

#### TENANT SATISFACTION WITH WORK UNDERTAKEN ON INSTALLING AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

Target - 90%

Actual - 98.6%



# 100%

For the second year running 100% of homes had their gas appliances serviced.

# NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITIES STANDARD

“We thought that most of this standard is being met, however, we found there is no main policy for maintaining and improving neighbourhoods. We had to give a red thumb, but South Tyneside Council have committed to look into this.”



## AREA MANAGEMENT

There are some great examples of partnership working. This section shows how South Tyneside Homes and South Tyneside Council work together with partners to keep your estate clean and safe. This is great but we feel that tenants could be more involved especially in walkabouts and local area management.

## ACTION AGREED



We have agreed with managers that they will develop more ways for tenants to get involved in resolving local issues and estate planning.



HANDY ESTATES



LOCAL INVOLVEMENT



RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS



## Safer South Tyneside

### TENANT SATISFACTION WITH ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR SERVICES

Target  8/10 Satisfied

Actual  9.2/10 Satisfied



The following partners work together across the Borough in a unique way to ensure estates are safe and free from anti-social behaviour:

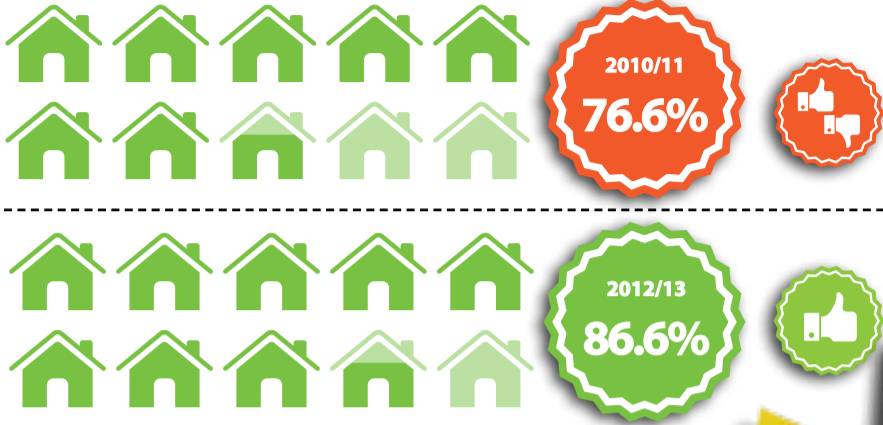
- Police
- Community Wardens
- South Tyneside Homes' Tenancy Enforcement Team
- Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- Environmental Health (noise complaints)
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service



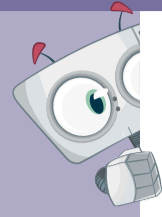
Safer South Tyneside Partners



OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH AREA AS A PLACE TO LIVE



DID YOU KNOW?



South Tyneside Homes has 26 Housing Management Officers that manage 53 estates on behalf of South Tyneside Council.



Want to speak to them? They can be contacted at your local housing office.



**A day in the life of...**

**Leanne Taylor**  
**Housing Management Officer**  
**Cleadon Park and the Lonnen, Horsley Hill Housing Office**

I arrange visits to all new tenants within the first week of them moving into their new home. If I identify any support needs, I will work with other organisations to put these in place for the tenant.

I can visit tenants in their home within 3 days of them requesting an appointment and all this helps tenants to stay in their tenancies which is what we aim to do.

It's working too! Only 1.75% of tenancies last less than 6 months now, this is better than the target of 3.25%.

DID YOU KNOW?



Sheltered Housing was rebranded and has changed its name to Housing Plus. Major changes were made and as a result empty, undesirable properties are a thing of the past!



Housing Plus tenants have a budget for social activities that they decide how to spend.



Tenants are unclear about their service charges and feel that there should be a charge for using the communal rooms for people who don't live in the scheme.



ACTION AGREED

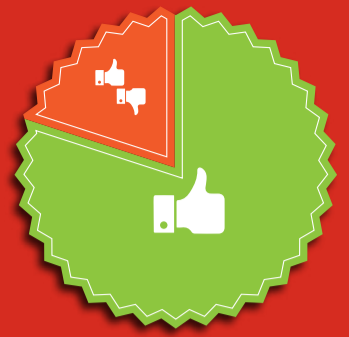


South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes have agreed to look at making service charges clearer and will review the use of communal rooms over the next year.



# TENANCY STANDARD

"There are a lot of good things going on within this standard. But we feel that the services on offer need better promotion as tenants don't know about them."



## A NEW BEGINNING FOR HOMEFINDER



New larger offices with more services in the Market Square, South Shields.

### ACTION AGREED



South Tyneside Homes has work to do in the way it publicises and promotes Homefinder services to tenants. They have committed to reviewing the leaflets and promotional materials.



## EMPTY HOMES

### Tenant Inspection Results

In March 2013, the Empty Homes service was inspected by tenants who found that the Lettable Standard was out of date and tenants were not central to the process.



### ACTION AGREED



The Empty Homes Team will work with tenants to review the Lettable Standard.



## Re-Let Times

**Target**  
38.5  
Days

**Actual**  
39.05  
Days



## OVERALL SATISFACTION OF NEW TENANTS



Target  
77.5%



Actual  
84.1%

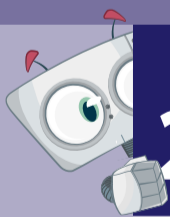


### COUNCIL POLICY NEWS FLASH

- South Tyneside Council have agreed a new Housing Allocations Policy. This will prioritise Council housing for those most in need and restrict those guilty of unacceptable behaviour and housing related debt from the Housing Register.
- A new Homelessness Strategy has been agreed which prioritises work to minimise the effects of Welfare Reform. Tenancy support will be put in place to help struggling tenants and residents remain in their homes.



### DID YOU KNOW?



approx

254

Average number of properties at any one time that were empty across the Borough.



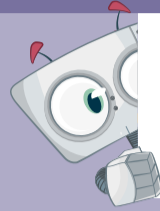
# KEEPING YOU IN YOUR HOME

"We know sometimes it can be hard to pay your rent or to get out of rent arrears. Maybe you are having difficulty with debt or perhaps your benefits have changed? Keeping you in your home is very important to South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes and you'd be surprised what they can do to help. This section will tell you about what is in place to support tenants across the Borough."

## WHAT THE COUNCIL AND SOUTH TYNESIDE HOMES ARE DOING TO HELP:

- Working with partner agencies such as Citizens Advice, Welfare Rights and services that support young people
- A Specialist Welfare Reform Team has been introduced

## DID YOU KNOW?



- You can view your rent statement on line
- You can pay your rent by direct debit
- You can make payments using your debit card  
Call 0191 4246468, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## ACTION AGREED



Tenants will soon be able to set up a direct debit over the phone rather than having to complete a form.



**91**

evictions for rent arrears during 2012-13

**163**

referrals were made to other agencies

## WELFARE REFORM

From November 2012 South Tyneside Homes put a lot of effort into getting in touch with and offering support to tenants whose income would be shrinking from the 1st of April 2013 because of changes to the benefits system. The Council set up a Welfare Reform team in South Tyneside Homes and by the end of March 2013 they had contacted over 75% of people affected.



"Before the changes came in, I was worried sick from rumours and didn't know what to do. The service provided by South Tyneside Homes' Welfare Reform Team has made dealing with the changes much easier."

# LOCAL OFFERS

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Local Offers are services that South Tyneside Homes have put in place as 'extras' to the normal services they provide. This is a requirement of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing 2012.

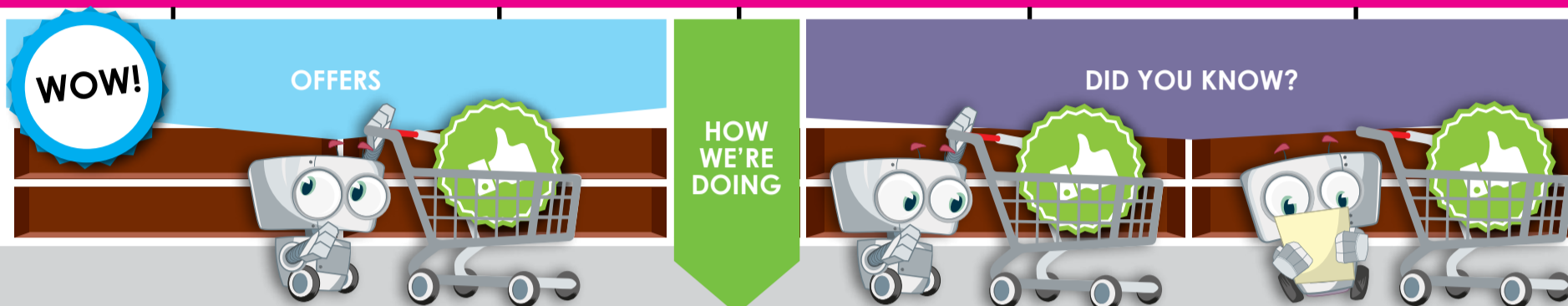
South Tyneside Council as the Landlord have to agree with tenants on the scope of the Local Offers as well as how they will be monitored, reported on and scrutinised by tenants. We think our Local Offers are good, but we feel tenants need to be more involved in the future.



## ACTION AGREED



South Tyneside Homes will agree with the Council when Local Offers will be reviewed and put in place monitoring arrangements.



## NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITIES

Arrange and attend evening walkabouts as part of specific campaigns in South Tyneside or in areas where there is, or has been, night time anti-social behaviour.		Community wardens help to carry out evening patrols. There are 11 wardens working Borough wide from 11.30am – 10.30pm.
Provide mediation, a victim champion and other support services for victims, witnesses and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.		The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit has a victim support champion working within it. It can also make referrals to other agencies such as Social Services and Floating Support Services.
Provide tenants in Huntcliffe House, Glenthorpe House, Martin Hall and Bishop Ramsey Court with Green Living Project.		All projects in these schemes have now been completed, support is still available from South Tyneside Homes.

## INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Provide fully accessible housing forums and drop in sessions every two months for black, Asian, minority, ethnic and disabled communities.		South Tyneside Homes have worked in partnership with Bliss=ability and Crest and have supported the facilitation of forums and drop ins.
Have a tailored programme of involvement across the Borough to increase engagement with young people on a wide range of housing issues.		South Tyneside Homes has worked with young people from Leaving Care and on a project with St Mary's School – 'Construction Site Not a Playground'. Staff were also involved in delivering basic advice on financial management to yr 9 pupils.
Have a tenant led budget to support social activity in older people's supported housing.		A budget of £9k was provided by South Tyneside Homes to support social activities.

## HOME

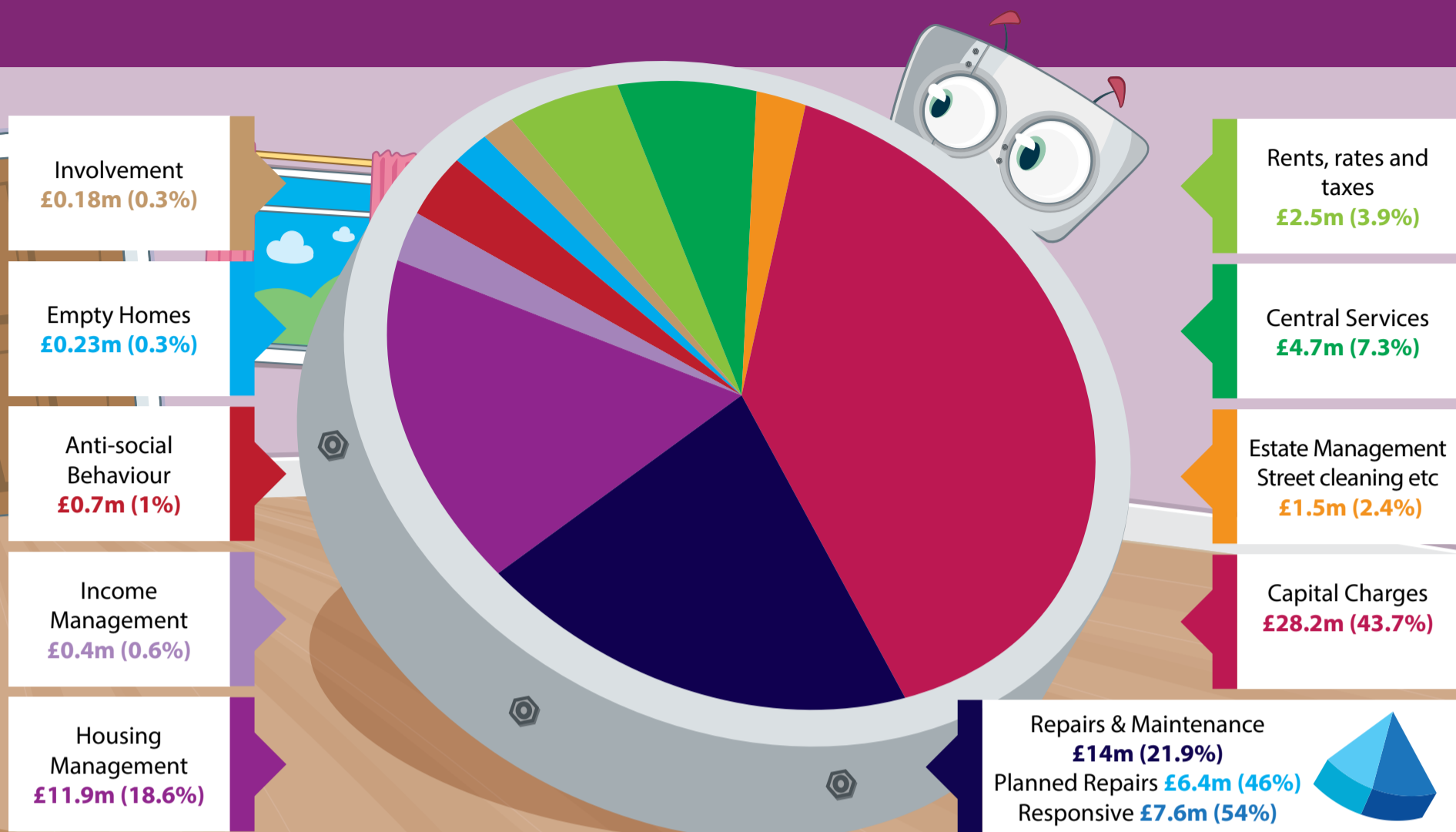
Offer a Handy Homes service to help out with small DIY jobs in your home.		832 jobs have been carried out. The Handy Homes Team visit Housing Plus Schemes every three weeks to carry out jobs.
Provide choice events in areas when there is Decent Homes work being carried out.		Two choice events were carried out in each of the following areas: Horsley Hill, Biddick Hall, Jarrow, Marsden, Lukes Lane and Harton Moor.
Carry out an MOT on your home so you know what work is needed and when it is planned and have an energy performance certificate for your home.		Some MOTs were carried out, however, this service needs to be reviewed.

## TENANCY

Give you the opportunity to tell us how satisfied you were with our empty homes service by speaking to one of our involved tenants.		Tenants no longer carry out these surveys but the contact centre do it on a monthly basis.
When you work during the week we will offer you a more flexible viewing time to come and look at an empty home.		Appointments to view properties can be made up until 5pm on weekdays and Saturday mornings.
Provide a weekly drop-in service at Hedworth & Fellgate, Boldon and Horsley Hill so you can speak directly to an Income Officer about your rent account.		This offer was withdrawn due to lack of demand.
Promote basic bank accounts and support you to access them.		Since starting this South Tyneside Homes have made 33 referrals for tenants to get a basic bank account.

# MAKING SENSE OF THE MONEY

South Tyneside Homes manage more than 18,000 homes on behalf of the Council and income from rent and other service charges for 2012-2013 was £64 million. Below is an overview of how your rent was spent in 2012 -2013:



## EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

**£4.1 million**

2011/12

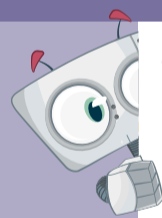
**£6.5 million**

2012/13

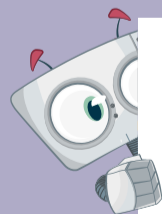
That's an increase of £2.4 million!



## DID YOU KNOW?



- South Tyneside Homes secured £0.9 million in external funding to carry out work to make homes more energy efficient.
- South Tyneside Homes secured £1.7m external funding to carry out energy efficiency works to 100 private homes in the Borough.
- The efficiency savings South Tyneside Homes made was used to carry out additional improvement works.



Housing subsidy was replaced in 2012/13 under the Governments self financing arrangements. This resulted in South Tyneside Council paying central government a one off payment of £61m instead of annual housing subsidy payments.

If you would like more detailed information about South Tyneside Homes' finances from 2012-2013, you can download the director's report and financial statements at [www.southtynesidehomes.co.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.co.uk)



**This information can be made available in a range of languages and alternative formats such as electronic copies (for example e-mail), or in large print, Braille or audiotape. Please contact the Communications team on 0300 123 6633**

**Arabic**

هذه المعلومات متوفرة بلغات عدة وصيغ مختلفة مثل النسخ الالكترونية (الايمل) والنسخ بأحرف كبيرة ولغة "البريل" للمكفوفين والنسخ السمعية. للحصول عليها يرجى مهاتمة فريق الاتصال على الرقم 0300 123 6633

**Bengali**

এই তথ্যকে বিভিন্ন ভাষা এবং বিভিন্ন ধরনের ফরম্যাটে দেয়া যেতে পারে যেমন, ইলেকট্রনিক কপি (উদাহরণ, ইমেইল), বড় অক্ষর, ব্রেইল অথবা অডিওটেপ। কমিউনিকেশন টিমের সাথে দয়া করে 0300 123 6633 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**Farsi**

این اطلاعات به زبان ها و فرمت های دیگر از قبیل نسخه های الکترونیکی (مانند ایمیل)، یا چاپ شده با حروف درشت، به خط بریل یا روی نوار صوتی قابل ارائه می باشد. لطفاً با گروه ارتباطات در شماره تلفن 0300 123 6633 تماس بگیرید.

South Tyneside Homes  
Registered in England and Wales  
Reg No: 05381705

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South Shields Town Hall,  
Westoe Road, south Shields, Tyne and Wear  
NE33 2RL

[www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk)

